

DOCTOR WHO

AND THE
INVASION
FROM SPACE



By Arrangement With

BBC tv

as played by
WILLIAM HARTNELL

**DOCTOR
WHO**
**AND
THE INVASION
FROM
SPACE**





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Doctor WHO and the INVASION FROM SPACE



THEY were all taking it very well, Dr Who decided, considering where they had come from and the way in which they had trapped themselves into what must be, to their simple minds, the most fantastic nightmare that ever the mind of man had suffered. The doctor himself was forced to admit that he was actually feeling a bit queasy himself.

The *Tardis* was wheeling and bucketing like a ship caught up in a violent storm on Earth. But the currents that tossed her about were not the currents of Earth but the web of energies that criss-crossed the universe and maintained the perfect balance of nature controlling the movements of the

planets around the stars, the stars in their courses within the galaxies, and the galaxies in their vast orbits in the cosmos itself.

"It's out of control, great warlock," shouted George Mortimer above the racket of the instruments and the chattering of the useless relays. "What has happened to your magic powers now, Master?"

Dr Who, still clinging to his now-useless control panel, could scarcely hold in his irritation. "If I've told you once I've told you a dozen times, I am no warlock, and there is no magic in my vessel. My *Tardis* is a scientific instrument, a very cabinet of all the marvels, I admit. But it is no more magical for the age it was built in than anything which had appeared in your world at the time when I rescued you from your burning hovel in Seventeenth Century London."

"Sometimes I wish you'd let us burn," moaned the man. "At least, it would be over by now. In this devil's box, who knows what torments and hardships we may have yet to endure."

"Tut, tut!" snapped Dr Who. "This is nothing, my good fellow. This is merely another hazard of space travel to be overcome. My vessel is temporarily out of control, I must admit, but just let me settle my stomach after this space storm and I'll take control again. How are the two children?"

"They sleep," the woman said mournfully. She was a large-eyed peasant woman in tattered rags, whose name was Helen. "After you annointed them for their burns, and fed them, they slept. Master, where are we? When you appeared at the door of our burning hut in London, we all thought you were the Devil himself come to



claim his own. But when your door opened and you pulled us all inside, I do confess that love of living made me forget who you were and I jumped in like my man and my two children. For what are we being punished now?"

Dr Who rode the lurchings of the *Tardis* like a seasoned mariner, his momentary nausea forgotten in his exasperation. "Will you good people stop calling me Master. I am a doctor; not a doctor of medicine, but a doctor of science. You are not being punished for anything, woman. It is by the purest unfortunate chance that you are in my

space-time ship. By an error of my controls, I materialised my ship in the middle of the Great Fire of London, just outside the door of your burning hovel. I didn't *rescue* you, wretched people. I merely had the bad luck to open my door just as you were staggering through the flames. You saw sudden unhopd-for salvation and you leaped, or scrambled—I forget which—into my vessel. In fact, it was all an inexcusable invasion of my privacy. I like being alone in my *Tardis*; I'm used to it. I don't relish being hampered by the presence of a family of medieval oafs who think I'm Old Nick himself, or at the very least one of his demons."

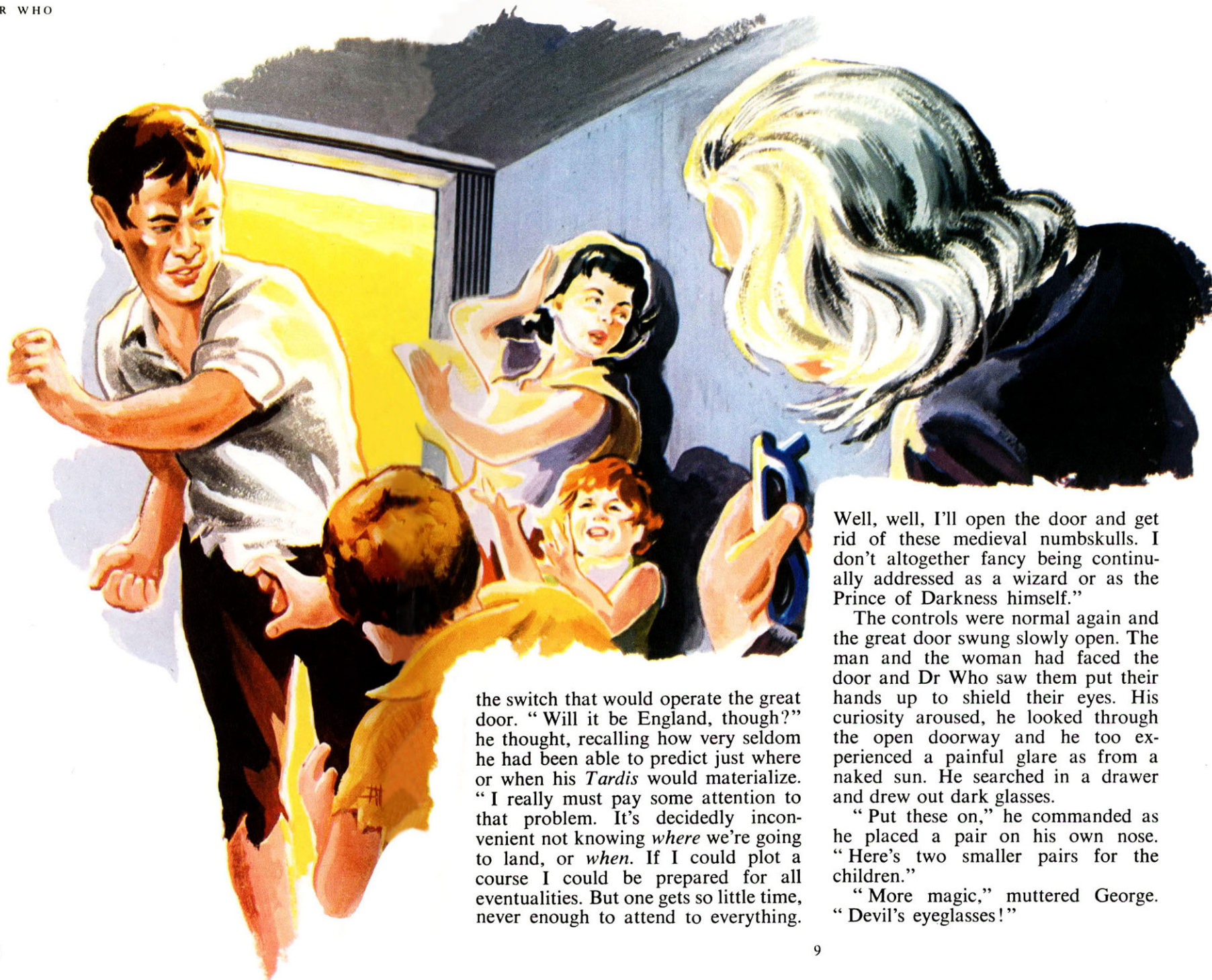
"Great Wizard," said Mortimer meekly, while the doctor paused for breath, "the devil-cabinet has stopped."

Dr Who stood upright and stared at the man. "Bless my soul," he beamed, "so we have. Now this is most interesting, most interesting. I wonder where we shall find ourselves when I open that door."

Helen and George cringed away from him and the woman went to where the two children were sleeping in a corner. "I'll wager *I* know where we've landed," muttered George. "I can already smell those everlasting fires."

"Nonsense, man, nonsense," scoffed Dr Who. "You are merely recalling the earthly flames of burning London. No doubt we are still somewhere in England, though I take leave to hope in a rather less barbarous period than your own. I'm afraid I cannot promise to return you to Earth in your own time. But at least we will land in England."

He chuckled to himself as he went to



Well, well, I'll open the door and get rid of these medieval numbskulls. I don't altogether fancy being continually addressed as a wizard or as the Prince of Darkness himself."

The controls were normal again and the great door swung slowly open. The man and the woman had faced the door and Dr Who saw them put their hands up to shield their eyes. His curiosity aroused, he looked through the open doorway and he too experienced a painful glare as from a naked sun. He searched in a drawer and drew out dark glasses.

"Put these on," he commanded as he placed a pair on his own nose. "Here's two smaller pairs for the children."

"More magic," muttered George. "Devil's eyeglasses!"

the switch that would operate the great door. "Will it be England, though?" he thought, recalling how very seldom he had been able to predict just where or when his *Tardis* would materialize. "I really must pay some attention to that problem. It's decidedly inconvenient not knowing *where* we're going to land, or *when*. If I could plot a course I could be prepared for all eventualities. But one gets so little time, never enough to attend to everything.

"Now, now, none of that, my friend," snapped the doctor. "There were spectacles in your age, though I don't suppose you ever saw or heard of them living, as you doubtless did, in a pigstye."

"And why not, might I ask?" George wanted to know. "Seeing as how I was a swineherd, where else would me and my folks live?"

Dr Who kept silent, pained beyond words.

He strode towards the open doorway. At once he was reduced from his usual lofty eminence to an uncomfortable feeling of smallness. Forgotten was his relative superiority to these peasants. Now he was reduced almost to their insignificance by the vision outside, a sight which must daunt and stupefy even the most knowing of men.

He stood in the doorway of *Tardis* and, through the dark glasses, stared up at the naked universe, at the myriads of stars that were strewn across the canopy of the sky around him. There seemed to be more stars, more thickly strewn than he had ever thought possible. Like Earthly moonlight, the intense starshine illumined his figure as he heard, with some amusement, snatches of conversation between Helen and George, crouched behind.

"Leastways, Helen love," George murmured, "it's not the other place. It's Heaven itself and we've got here alive."

Dr Who took the dark glasses from his face and stared up at the skies. Off to one side hung a gigantic oval wheel of stars, like an elongated catherine wheel coruscating with fire. The thickness of its star density made it clearly visible through the tracery of the nearer stars. It filled the whole of the heavens and it almost seemed to be



wheeling slowly round in an eternal whirling orbit. Its shape and its position tantalised him for a moment and then it came to him.

"That is Andromeda," he cried. "That is the Great Spiral Nebula in the constellation of Andromeda," he told the pair behind him. "On Earth we called it that. M.31 was its designation in the catalogues. But you wouldn't have heard of that, would you? To think of it, Andromeda! But it's big, it's huge, it's vast, it fills the skies. On Earth, Andromeda is nearly a million light-years away. Certainly we are now very, very much closer to it than that. I'm very much afraid, my good people, that I'm not going to be able to return you to Earth as soon as I had hoped."

"If you've brought us to Heaven, sir," said Helen devoutly, "it's all we ask. This must be Heaven, mustn't it, George?"

"It's Heaven, love," said George, "and here come the angels. Glory be, to think that we should live to see the blessed angels. And we still living. We must wake the young ones. They must see this."

"For goodness sake," fumed Dr Who, turning to the tattered couple, "how many times must I—?" He stopped and his mouth opened and closed without emitting any words. For a moment he was tempted to agree with the Mortimers, for the six figures approaching them were certainly as close to angelic as humanity had ever imagined. He peered through the glare of the starshine as the six came closer. At least they were wingless, he saw with wry relief.

Immensely tall, their bodies—what could be seen of them—were bronzed

and gleaming. They wore silvery tunics and their blonde heads were bare. They all appeared to be male and they wore pleasant smiles on their extremely handsome faces.

"Welcome, Men," said one of them, in a musical voice. "The Aalas bid you welcome. The One is awaiting you. If you will follow us we will take you there."

"Mother, I'm frightened," came the voice of the little girl, clinging to her mother's rags. "Where are we? Have we died?"

"Peace, children," said Helen. "You are safe with your father and me and with this powerful magician. We passed through the fires and this is our reward at last."

"I'm hungry," whined the boy. His father cuffed him and he set up a howl, making Dr Who turn irritably. The Doctor beamed at the six figures.

"This is indeed a very civil welcome, sir," he said, examining the

creature closely as he spoke. "What is this place and where are we? I confess I am puzzled—"

"All will be told you that is necessary," smiled the other. "But not by us. We are gratified at sight of some of the legendary Men, of whom at one time we heard so much. The One, who can remember, will tell you all that is necessary for you to know. Come, now."

There's no expression in those faces, Dr Who told himself, or in those large blue eyes. They're like zombies, or puppets. And yet they certainly *are* men. But why does the creature keep calling us 'Men,' as if we were



some extraordinary and quite separate species? I suppose I will find out in good time. He turned to the four. "Come along now, you four, don't keep our friends waiting. I am sure we are in good hands."

Five of the creatures had turned and were walking away. The sixth, who had spoken to them, awaited them smiling.

Dr Who locked the door of *Tardis* and pocketed the electronic key. "That's safe for a little while at least," he told himself.

Herding his refugees like a small flock of very frightened sheep, he followed the guide. To his intense astonishment, the other five had completely vanished. Soon he found the reason. They came to an aperture in

the ground through which a stairway led downwards. The guide smilingly motioned them to descend.

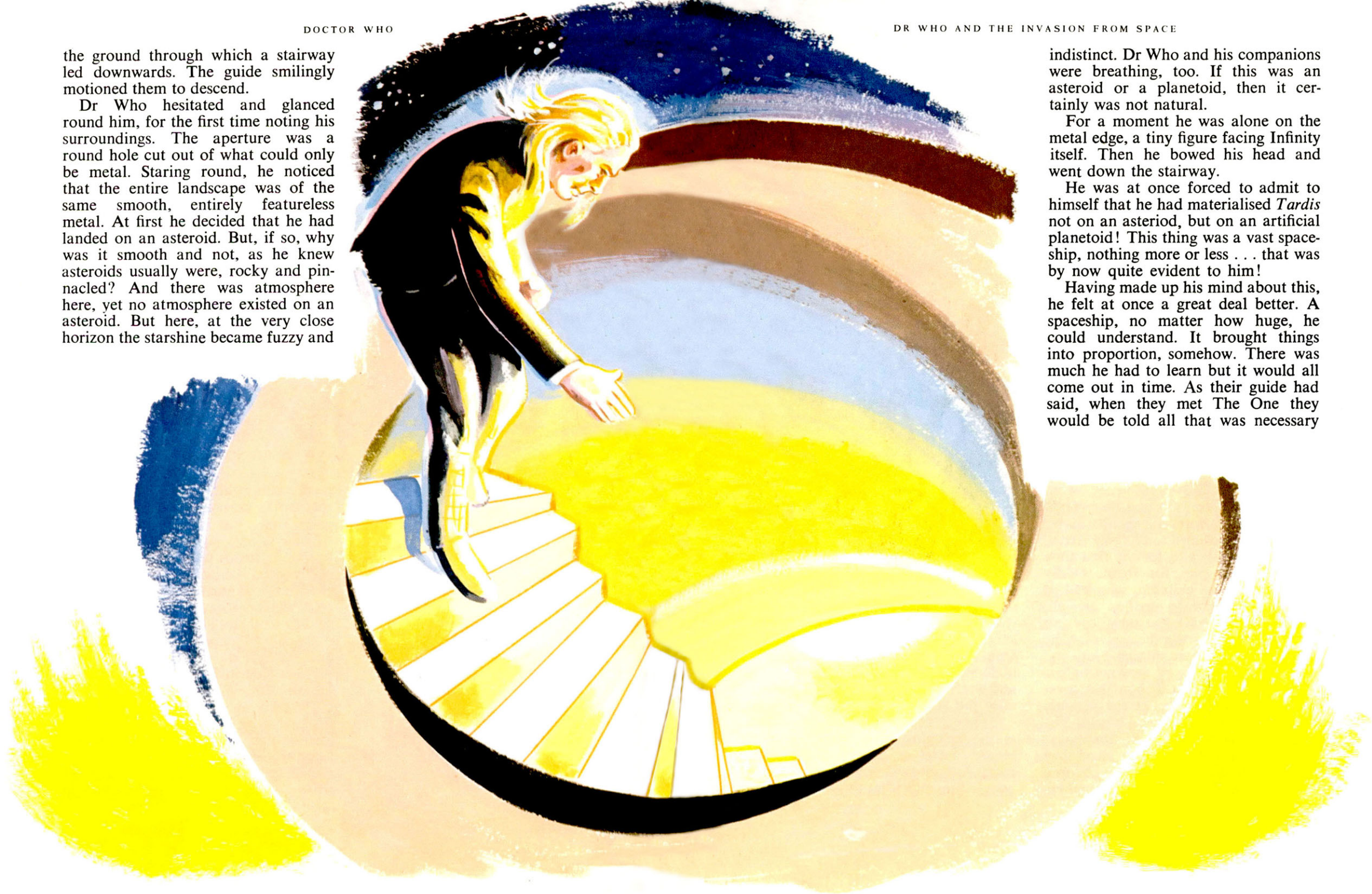
Dr Who hesitated and glanced round him, for the first time noting his surroundings. The aperture was a round hole cut out of what could only be metal. Staring round, he noticed that the entire landscape was of the same smooth, entirely featureless metal. At first he decided that he had landed on an asteroid. But, if so, why was it smooth and not, as he knew asteroids usually were, rocky and pin-nacled? And there was atmosphere here, yet no atmosphere existed on an asteroid. But here, at the very close horizon the starshine became fuzzy and

indistinct. Dr Who and his companions were breathing, too. If this was an asteroid or a planetoid, then it certainly was not natural.

For a moment he was alone on the metal edge, a tiny figure facing Infinity itself. Then he bowed his head and went down the stairway.

He was at once forced to admit to himself that he had materialised *Tardis* not on an asteroid, but on an artificial planetoid! This thing was a vast space-ship, nothing more or less . . . that was by now quite evident to him!

Having made up his mind about this, he felt at once a great deal better. A spaceship, no matter how huge, he could understand. It brought things into proportion, somehow. There was much he had to learn but it would all come out in time. As their guide had said, when they met The One they would be told all that was necessary





for them to know. The One . . . a curious phrase that. And a very curious name for the being who evidently ruled this ship. The One? The One—what?

They walked along shining corridors and through doorways that opened on breaking invisible rays. They went down in swift elevators and they rested on moving platforms. The Mortimers were by now reduced to cringing terror-stricken animals and for the first time Dr Who felt pity for them. Oddly enough, the two children, who had at first seemed most terrified of all, seemed now to have lost their fear and to be almost enjoying themselves, if he could judge by their shining eyes.

Dr Who felt himself growing lighter and he reasoned that by now they must be close to the centre of the gigantic sphere that was this metal world. The man and the woman, half floating as they walked, were now convinced they were indeed dead, but the two children hopped and skipped with great aban-

don, enjoying every minute of it.

"We are here now," said their guide, smiling. "We will leave you now. The One will speak to you presently. We understand that you will require food and water. All will be prepared for you, after the audience is over."

"Here," protested Dr Who, "what is the meaning of this? Are we to regard ourselves as prisoners? I demand to know where we are, what you people are, and what this is all about."

But he was speaking to the empty air; they were alone. Fuming, he looked round him.

The Mortimers were gathered into a close group, looking round them with eyes filled with dread.

It was a small round room, of the same gleaming metal as the walls, floors, and roofs of the passageways they had passed along. Across one arc of the circular wall facing them was a broad glass-like panel, in which faint

lights shone. A broad shelf protruded from the base of the window and Dr Who could see that a tracery of illuminated lines filled the shelf. He walked round the room and approached the window.

"So you are a man," came a deep voice coming, it seemed, from the very air around them. "We had almost forgotten, so deeply is the memory of Man buried in our consciousness. It is curious to meet an ancestor. We must talk, Man. There will be much of which

you will be able to remind us. You must conquer your fear. We recall that fear is the most powerful emotion that Man permitted to misrule him. There is no fear in my galaxy for we are all-powerful, and where there is all-power there can be no fear. The Aalas know no fear. You must learn to be like them in this."

"Who's speaking?" asked Dr Who sharply. "I like to know who's addressing me, sir, I'll tell you that for a start. I'm not going to stand here to be talked at by some invisible person."

There was a slight pause and what sounded like the faraway sound of clicking. Random light swept across the panel and then the voice spoke again.

"Odd specimens we have collected," the voice said, almost as though it was speaking to itself. "Ignorant also, it would seem. Well, every galaxy must contain some backward worlds and many backward people. It was so in Andromeda long, long ago. I understand you Men of the Milky Way have



individual names. What is your name?"

"My name is no concern of yours," said the doctor defiantly. "These others are no friends of mine, mere chance acquaintances. Their names are Mortimer. Our journey together in my ship is mere coincidence: I happened to find them in great danger. They were burning to death—but, no matter, you would not understand."

"You are mistaken: I understand everything. How else could I rule my galaxy?"

"Rule your galaxy!" The doctor was aghast.

Who, in the name of fortune was this madman who was addressing him? He began to feel as though he was in a dream and he noticed that the Mortimer man and woman were staring around them, their eyes filled with horror. Invisible voices, no less, he could imagine them telling each other. Devils, demons, warlocks, witches, they would be thinking, and perhaps wishing they really were dead.



"You are lower in intelligence than we thought when we brought you down," the voice said. "Of course I rule my galaxy, what else. Is not your your galaxy ruled by One, as Andromeda was?"

"One *what?*" babbled the doctor. "You keep on saying that word. What does it mean? Of course our galaxy is not ruled by anyone. It is a vast cloud of stars and planets wheeling round in the Cosmos. I know only a fractional

part of it. But this is nonsense. Why am I stooping to discuss astronomy and cosmology with an invisible being? Show yourself, sir, and we will talk."

"Mercy on us, Master," moaned the woman Helen. "Don't ask that. We couldn't bear that, sir. We couldn't bear to see the hooves and the horns and the tail, to see the smoke coming out of those red eyes."

"For pity's sake, sir," howled the man George. "Where are we? What is this awful place? Indeed it was better in your devil-box."

Dr Who shook off their dragging hands and stared again at the panel. At first he had thought the voice came from there but now it seemed to be all around him. As in a dream, he heard it speak again.

"This will need further consideration. I had thought that you and your curious vehicle would be of use to us. It may still be so but we must think. First, tell me what *you* are and from whence you came."

"As you will not grant me that

courtesy," Dr Who said acidly, "I will show you that at least on Earth men are civilised. The names of these people I have told you. You need not concern yourself with them. They are ignorant, primitive peasants whom I picked up from a time long past. They know nothing."

"Now *I* am a Doctor of Science and I travel through the universe in my space-time vessel named *Tardis*. I can travel instantaneously from any point

in the universe to any other. I can travel back into the past and forward into the future.

"My passengers are from the planet Earth, in the system named the Solar System after the star Sol.

"Now you have all the information you need about us. You will please tell *me* now the meaning of all this charade you are putting on for our puzzlement. Come out from behind that panel and talk to me, man to man."

"And to think that you are Man, my ancestor," said the voice. "It scarcely seems possible! But it must be so, for the men of Andromeda made us, in the dim millions of years ago. In us are the minds and the concepts of all the Andromedan men. We must search through our memory banks and find



out all there is to know about Men. Your vessel will be brought inside and you will eat and drink and sleep. We will talk again later and by then we will know all about you. It is evident we were wise to draw you to us when we apprehended you. The Diagrams are not complete without Man. Now we have you with us and on our side, we will be able to accomplish the task."

The voice ceased and a slight humming sound that had been present all

the time ceased altogether, leaving the doctor's head ringing slightly.

Angry beyond measure, Dr Who shouted at the panel and, going to it, tried to loosen it from its frame. But at the first touch he leaped back, his hands and arms tingling painfully.

"Be warned," said the voice, and Dr Who glared venomously at the panel, across which lights raced, slowed down, dimmed, and finally vanished, leaving the whole expanse dead and neutral.

"Upon my word," fumed the doctor, "this is beyond all reason. Stand up, you four, don't cringe down there on the floor. We are up against something very much out of my experience. I'll grant you that you could be right when you think it's diabolic. There's certainly something very, very queer about this whole business."

"You will come with us, please," said a pleasant voice at his elbow and, whipping round, he frowned into the face of their guide. At least he assumed it was the same creature. One could really not be sure: they all looked so much alike. "There is food and drink prepared for you and a place where you will sleep. The audience is over."

"Indeed," said the doctor loftily. "And suppose it isn't over for me? Suppose I want to go on asking questions? What then?"

"We will answer your questions," was the placid reply. "If you are to be of assistance to The One, they have told us what we must tell you."

"The One!" Dr Who repeated. "And yet you said 'they.' What is the meaning of all this mumbo-jumbo?"

"Mumbo-jumbo! That is a word we do not know. But come. It is understood that you will all be tired and

hungry and thirsty. Your needs are known."

"At least that's something," grumbled the doctor, and he followed the others through an opening made by the raising of a panel in the metal wall. Out in a passageway, he at once became conscious of a muted, far-off noise, like the sound of mighty engines far away. All the passageways were brightly lit and there was a constant coming and going of creatures exactly like their guide. Smiling mindlessly, the creatures filed along in groups great and small, some empty-handed and others with strange tools in their hands or carrying instruments which, at first glance, the doctor could not identify.

They reached a small round room where there were couches and a table with dishes. Without waiting to be asked, the Mortimer family fell on the dishes without further ado. The doctor pulled the man back.

"Be careful, peasant," he warned sharply. "Look at what you're going to put in your stomach, won't you?"

"We haven't eaten for three days, doctor," said Helen Mortimer. "My little ones are fair starving, aren't you, my pets?"

Little Ida Mortimer looked up with her mouth open. "It's lovely, Mother," she said. "Never have I tasted food like this. Alan, have some of that red jelly stuff."

Conquering his revulsion at his companions' greedy appetites, Dr Who tried some of the food and found it strangely palatable and attractive. For drinking there was water, which seemed wonderfully fresh and cool.

"It is to your taste?" asked their guide courteously. "It is very many years since we were called upon to

make anything like this."

"Make anything—you mean you've made this!" the doctor said with disbelief in his eyes. "Why should you need to make it? Your own food would have been adequate. Why go to this trouble for five prisoners?"



The bland face looked back at him smiling. "There is no food in our world," he said. "We could hardly expect beings of your construction to be able to gain energy from raw elec-

tricity. But there is enough knowledge in the memory banks of The One to enable them to make food for you. You will not lack while you are in our world."

"Now, look here," exclaimed Dr Who exasperated. "You're talking in

very glad I am not a man."

Dr Who gaped at the creature. "Then—" he began. He paused, blinked his eyes. "If you aren't a man, what are you?"

"We are the Aalas," was the serene reply. "We are the servants and agents of The One, who rules over us, cares for us, and who is leading us from our galaxy to a new and glorious future in a younger, fresher galaxy with many, many millions of ages of life in it. Our future home is rich in suns and worlds filled with the heavy elements. A continuous diet of electricity becomes monotonous. We would taste again of the heady delights of radio-activity. The One has told us that the Milky Way is particularly rich in radio-actives. Are you acquainted with that galaxy?"

His eyes glazing, Dr Who stared speechlessly at the creature. Either he was sound asleep and dreaming fantasies, or this creature was . . . But his mind reeled as he considered the implications of the thought.

The creature was a robot. No! that wasn't right—it was an android. It was like a human being but it had not been born; it had been artificially made, in a laboratory or a workshop. It didn't eat or drink.

Dr Who's mind flashed to the atmosphere on the surface of the spaceship. The creature breathed air, in that much it was familiar. It used up its energy and refuelled its system with raw electricity, or with the radiations from radio-active elements. Could he believe that?

The creature spoke of galaxies as one might speak of a neighbouring town. Dr Who's thoughts continued. It was an inhabitant of a great metal

riddles, man. I can't understand half you say."

"You call me man," said the other. "But I am not a man, I am an Aala. From what I have learned since you have been here, I must say that I am



spaceship-world, adrift in the void between the nebula of Andromeda and the nebula of the Milky Way.

Such thoughts and their implication made Dr Who feel quite faint. Wiping his forehead, he glanced round. The four Mortimers were watching and listening with round eyes and open mouths.

"If you are not human," the doctor said, "who made you?"

"The One made us, to the image and likeness of those who made The

One. The humans of the worlds of Andromeda were the patterns. Of course, we are immensely superior to the archaic 'men' of our galaxy, now long forgotten by all but The One. We are immensely stronger. We are immortal. We do not eat or drink or sleep. We breathe air as The One has found no better way to keep our blood pure and fresh."

Dr Who was gradually gaining a dim idea of the situation. He sat still, staring fascinated at the creature as it

talked. A world filled with these supermen, ageless and all-powerful, made in laboratories, and all the servants of—what? His mind boggled at such an idea.

“You said that the men of Andromeda made your One,” he said at last. “What is The One? Is it a creature like you and . . . like us? Does it think it is God? *What* is it and *where* is it?”

The Aala smiled tolerantly as one would smile at an ignorant child.

“The One is all around us,” it explained.

“It is our world and its parts are everywhere in our world. It speaks to us wherever we are and directs us at whatever task we are engaged. Our greatest satisfaction is to do the bid-

ding of The One. You and your four companions will also be integrated into our world; you will play your part in our great invasion. For that you were brought into our world.”

“I wasn’t *brought* here,” blustered the doctor. “I was voyaging in my *Tardis* when it materialised on the surface of your—ship, world—whatever you like to call it.”

“You were brought,” insisted the Aala smoothly. Nothing happens in the universe save by the will of The One.”

The creature is mad, crazy . . . that’s it, mused the doctor. It’s a mad robot, the ship is filled with them. Heaven knows how many there are of them. All the willing slaves of some titanic master-mind, probably some great com-



puter or thinking machine, a hyper-brain.

What kind of a mare's nest have I blundered into now? And with what unpromising companions, he thought, glancing at the four Mortimers. In their case familiarity was definitely breeding contempt anyway, he reflected sourly, noting that the man and the woman seemed to have discarded their craven fear. As for the two children, Alan and Ida, they were still busy eating.

"Bring the humans to us," boomed a great voice in the air around them and the Aala rose to its feet. "Come," it said smoothly. "The One calls for you again."

"I won't go," fumed Dr Who stubbornly. "I haven't eaten or drunk or slept. More important still, I haven't thought this thing through. I won't come until I've reflected on this thing."

Then, all at once, the room seemed to be filled with creatures like their guide. Arms like steel gripped them and all five of them were carried, unable even to struggle, out of the room, along the passageways and into the round room of the panel and the moving lights.

His anger forgotten, Dr Who felt his spirit expand as he saw in the middle of the circle his *Tardis*.

Here was his link with reality. In his *Tardis* again, all this stupid, irrational nonsense would fade away like the moonshine it so obviously was. Androids indeed! Thinking machines, and invasions of galaxies! What utter rubbish!

Then his anger returned as he saw that the doorway of *Tardis* was open and inside the spaceship were crowds of the Aalas. He leaped forward in rage, but he was held back as easily as

if he was an infant. "How dare you?" he roared. "How dare you touch my ship?"

"We did better even than we imagined," said the great voice all around them. "This vessel of yours is indeed a most remarkable thing. We have examined it to its smallest component part. Most of its mechanisms and instrumentation are retrogressive compared with ours. One thing only we cannot fathom. What does it *do*? What is it *for*?"

"What does it *do*?" raged Dr Who. "Why, you numbskull! You ignoramus! It is my home, my world, my ship. I came here in it and I intend to depart in it very soon. I was given to understand that you knew everything, my fine fellow. Now, what about this?"

"There is something missing from it," said the voice. "My servants tell me that it is a space-time vessel. You told the truth there. But it is inert. It

will not move or dematerialise or travel at all. What is missing from the ship, man?"

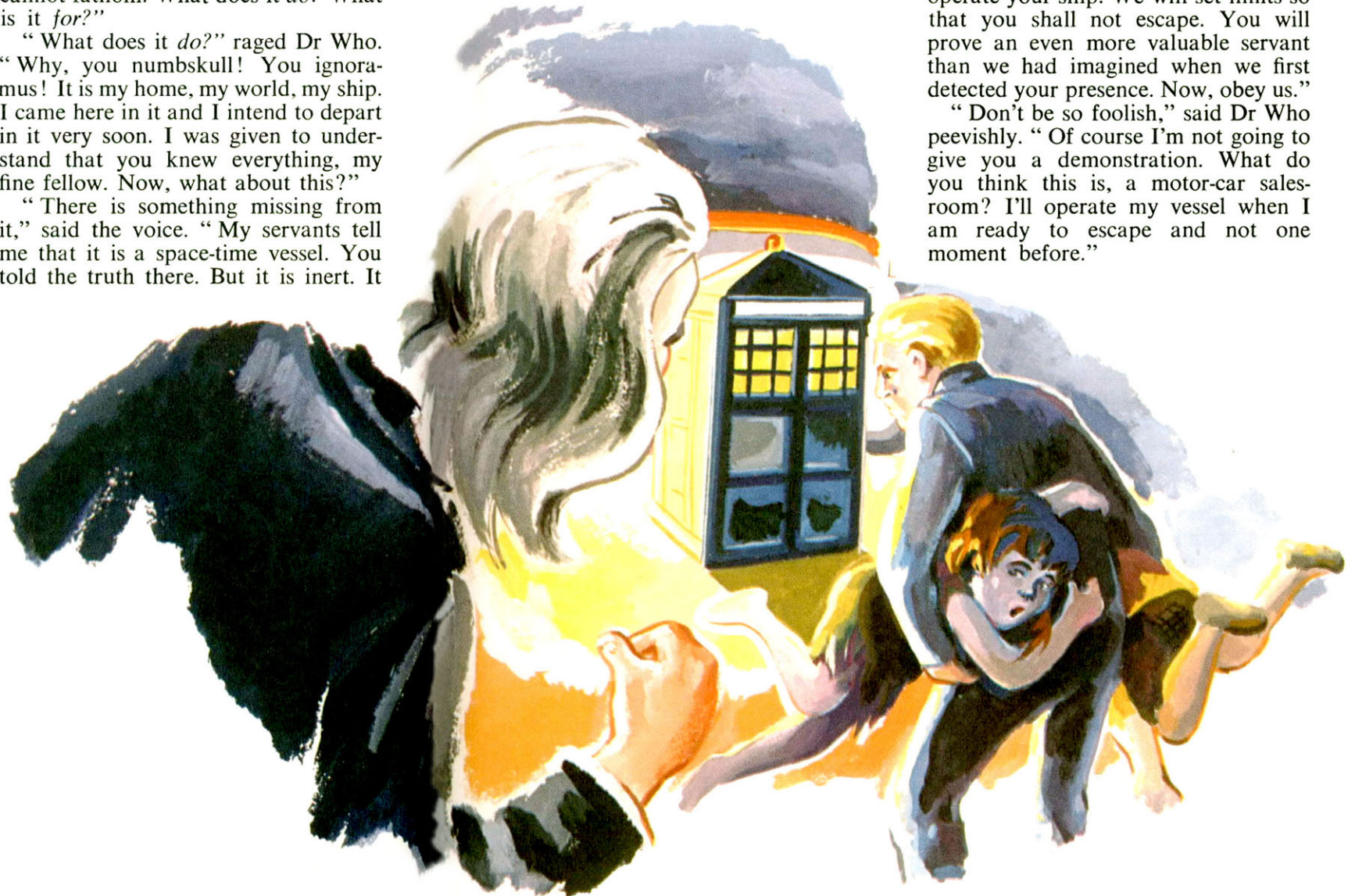
Dr Who shook off the arms of steel that gripped him. He went forward and faced the glass panel which he now knew must be the main 'voice' of an enormous thinking machine.

"You are right, there *is* one thing missing," he said loudly. "There is

myself. My *Tardis* is no mere mechanism of metal and wire, of glass and plastic. My spirit and my nature are built into it. Without *my* hands at the controls and without *my* brain to command it, the ship is a mere metal box of cold, dead instruments."

"You speak truth," said the voice, toneless and passionless. "That we know. Our servants tell us so. You will give us a demonstration, man. You will operate your ship. We will set limits so that you shall not escape. You will prove an even more valuable servant than we had imagined when we first detected your presence. Now, obey us."

"Don't be so foolish," said Dr Who peevishly. "Of course I'm not going to give you a demonstration. What do you think this is, a motor-car sales-room? I'll operate my vessel when I am ready to escape and not one moment before."



"Master," muttered George Mortimer at his elbow. "Do what the thing demands. Once inside your devil-box we will all escape—" He stopped, for a piercing scream from his wife cut through his words.

"George, George," she screamed, "the children, they've gone, they've vanished. Merciful heavens, my two bairns. They've been taken away. They'll be tortured, they'll be killed, maybe *eaten* by these savages."

"My good woman," said Dr Who, trying to make himself heard above the hubbub.

He gave up the futile effort to communicate, for strange sounds were audible all around them. There were grindings and whistles, roared words and half-words, now a hollow booming noise and again a strident howling.

All the Aalas in the circular room were standing quite still, glassy-eyed and blank-faced, while across the panel raced a veritable St Elmo's fire of lights.

Forgetting the Mortimers completely, Dr Who stared fascinated at the panel and from the panel to the silent, motionless figures of the Aala. The machine had gone mad.

His senses suddenly crystal-clear and coldly rational, he knew what had happened. This pandemonium had been caused by his own refusal to obey this fantastic, monstrous machine. The Aalas were its mindless slaves and never, since its manufacture and assembly, had any other creature ever dreamed of disobeying it.

Suddenly the noises died away, the lights slowed and the Aalas came to life again. When next he heard the voice, Dr Who knew that the titanic mind that inhabited the great machine

had again recovered its sanity.

"The first time for ten hundred million years," said the voice. "My memory banks tell me of what it was like back in those days in Andromeda. You are indeed a most remarkable specimen of an extinct race, man. It may even do us good to have met you. It is possible that we may have grown too accustomed to mindless obedience. The first onset of a refusal to obey almost unseated our intellect. But our temporary insanity has passed. You and we can do great things together, man. With our diagrams and your vessel we can occupy the galaxy that is our objective very much faster than we had thought possible."

Dr Who breathed hard but made no reply. Glancing round him, he saw no sign of any of the four Mortimers. The mother and the father must have rushed out after their missing offspring in the confusion, he supposed. Ah, well, no doubt they'd be rounded up in quick time.

"I can have no idea of what you are talking, my dear sir," he said loftily. He was going to speak to this thing as man to man. There was going to be no nonsense about super-minds, about Oneness, or any other suggestion of this thing's superiority. Dr Who held the whip-hand here, of that he was convinced. This monster machine wanted his *Tardis*. Well, without himself, the *Tardis* was useless to it. And they couldn't force him to operate it. He would talk with this nightmare entity and find out all he could. Then maybe he could find some way to get out of this fantastic dream.

"Your vessel can travel faster than light," said the voice. "Now, that is a thing that we have never been able to



do. There is a million light-years from my lost galaxy to the new one. We have been travelling already over a hundred million years. We estimate that it will be over three hundred million more years before our armada first enters the outer reaches of the Milky Way. My worlds, equipped with replicas of your strange vessel, could accomplish the journey in a matter of seconds."

"That's where you are wrong," put in Dr Who. Putting his thumbs into his waistcoat armholes he began to strut about the room. The Aalas stood, not now quite motionless, but not hindering his perambulations. "My *Tardis* travels, not by any normal way of speed or velocity. My ship dematerialises its atoms at the point of departure and rematerialises them at journey's end. The journey itself takes no time at all."

"That is patently absurd, strange little man," the voice commented. "But I must realise that you are a man, a strange bundle of contradictory elements. I have been taught just now that we, who thought ourselves equipped with all the knowledge there is, still have a few things to learn. If you are capable of disobedience, man, perhaps you are also capable of that other strange thing in man, the telling of falsehoods. It is indeed odd. When your work for me is finished, man, we feel that we may keep you alive. Your perpetual presence would whet our intellect."

"If you want my ship," said Dr Who, a shiver striking him at the last words, "you'll do more than merely keep me alive."

"We can make an exchange perhaps?" enquired the voice. "My diagrams for your ship, its secrets and you to operate it?"

"Your diagrams," repeated the doctor slowly. "What are these diagrams? I have heard talk of them before. Tell me about them and we will see if we can make a bargain." He must keep this entity talking and find out all he could if he would extricate them from this predicament.

Now he was given evidence that the

intellect of this thing was indeed as great as he had judged possible. He heard the voice talking to many of the Aalas at the same time as it was talking to himself. He heard it giving instructions for the pursuit and recapture of the other humans; he heard many quite incomprehensible commands, probably about the manning of the great ship that was almost a world, and he heard it replying to himself. This being was much more complex than the human mind, which could only concentrate on a limited number of things simultaneously.

"I detect craft in you as well, man," the voice was saying. "You are thinking that you will take my diagrams and will then try to trick me. You would be warned not to attempt this. To pit your intellect against mine would be an absurdity. Now, tell us, is it possible for the space-time travelling element to be installed in my worlds? If it is a matter of construction only, the problem is solved. Our Aalas can make in our workshops a million replicas of your strange ship. In fact, if our plan is to succeed, almost a million will be required. How soon can you start to give our Aalas their instructions?"

"I've told you," said the doctor desperately. "My *Tardis* is quite unique. Without myself in it, it is quite inert. You discovered that for yourself. Even if I were inclined to assist you in your preposterous plans, I could not do it. There is only one *Tardis*, and there never will be another."

If this thing had vanity, he thought, that might fix it. The idea that this weird intelligence, calling itself The One, might have developed, over the incredible ages of its existence, emotions, emotions something like the

emotions of humanity from which it sprang, had only just occurred to him. After all, the flesh and bones and blood of humanity had bred all the emotions. Why should not metal and glass and plastic do the same, in an infinite universe with all the time in the cosmos for the strange force known as evolution to operate?

The great doorway stood temptingly open and even as his mind was busy, he glanced longingly towards it. But many of the Aalas were standing between himself and it and now they were alert and watching him. He felt that if he could only regain possession of his ship and close the door, he might make good his escape. Not for a single moment could he credit that impossible suggestion that his ship had been brought into materialisation by the will of this queer super-computer. Now, there is one way by which I might do it, he thought. Immediately and filled with desperation, he put his plan into action.

"I will not do this thing," he announced calmly. "I refuse absolutely to obey your commands." and he stood, feet planted wide apart, head thrown back in defiance.

As he had expected, the previous reaction to opposition recurred: the racing lights, the confused sounds and the motionlessness of the Aalas. Dr Who acted quickly and gained the open doorway of the *Tardis* before any of the slave-androids could make a move. Working desperately, he tripped the controls and the door closed slowly behind him. Like a madman, he twisted knobs and spun wheels, he turned switches and he locked levers into position. The humming noise of his instruments went up and up the

scale of audibility and the screens, which up to now had shown him the same scene in the little round room, now shifted and a pattern of stars appeared. He was free again!

Most unfortunately, the very first thought that struck him was of the Mortimers. He had left those wretched folk back in the world of the Aalas. No doubt by now they had been recaptured. It might be possible that in their terror, they would drop dead from shock . . . But he knew that this was very unlikely. A peasant family from the Seventeenth Century would be tougher than that, he felt. He shook his shoulders irritably and determined that he must forget the Mortimers.

Almost instantly this concern was driven completely from his mind by the enormity of what was happening. By now, he should be many, many millions

of space-miles away from his prison-planet. Alternatively, he should be thousands of years either into the past or the future. And yet, quite obviously, *Tardis* was still in the vicinity of the strange metal world of the Aalas.

That monstrous machine then had been right. It could stop and start his ship at will. It must have brought him down and it was now preventing him from escaping. Recovering its sanity, it had at once put out its tentacles of force to hold him close to the spaceship-world.

In the sight-screens he saw the surface of that world wheeling and spinning below him. He saw crowds of the Aalas out on the surface, apparently watching him but doing nothing else. In a very passion of rage, he attacked his control board again. By heaven, he would break the power of this evil intelligence.



There were powers in his *Tardis* which even he himself had but barely suspected and now he found new thoughts and new ideas and his mind poured them out into the unearthly engines that powered his ship on its incredible journeys.

He chuckled to himself as the surface of the Aala world slipped down from the base of his screens and the starfield came into full view again. Had he actually succeeded in breaking loose? The stars around him seemed strangely close. Of course that was just the impression his eyes gave. In reality they were immense distances of light-years away.

But were they? There was one that seemed dangerously close and, like a bombshell, it came to him. The object was no star; it was in reality a spaceship-world like that he had left, shining by reflected starshine. The One had said there were almost a million of them, in the 'armada' he had heard mentioned by the Aala who had guided them. A million worlds like that other one, each one travelling for millions of years across the inter-galactic void, each one holding millions of the weird Aalas, intent upon one invasion of the Milky Way, to subdue the inhabitants of the populated planets and reduce them to mindless obedience, such as The One received from its own slaves.

Now, perhaps for the first time, a suspicion that what he had been told might be actually literal truth swept over him. Suddenly he felt intolerably small: like a gnat inside a cyclotron, or a mote of dust inside a nebula.

Of what use for him to pit his puny mind against this super-mind, this deathless intellect, evolved out of millions of dead Andromedans. He had

one brain, while *it* had the distilled essence of millions upon millions of brains long dead in far Andromeda. The contest was too unequal.

But submit he knew he never would. Could he possibly succeed then by cunning? Did that seem too stupid a thought? No, by heavens, it was not a stupid thought. That strange creature, The One, might be the end-result of millions of Andromedan brains but nevertheless it was merely one individual. Great as its intellect might prove to be, it had just one mind.

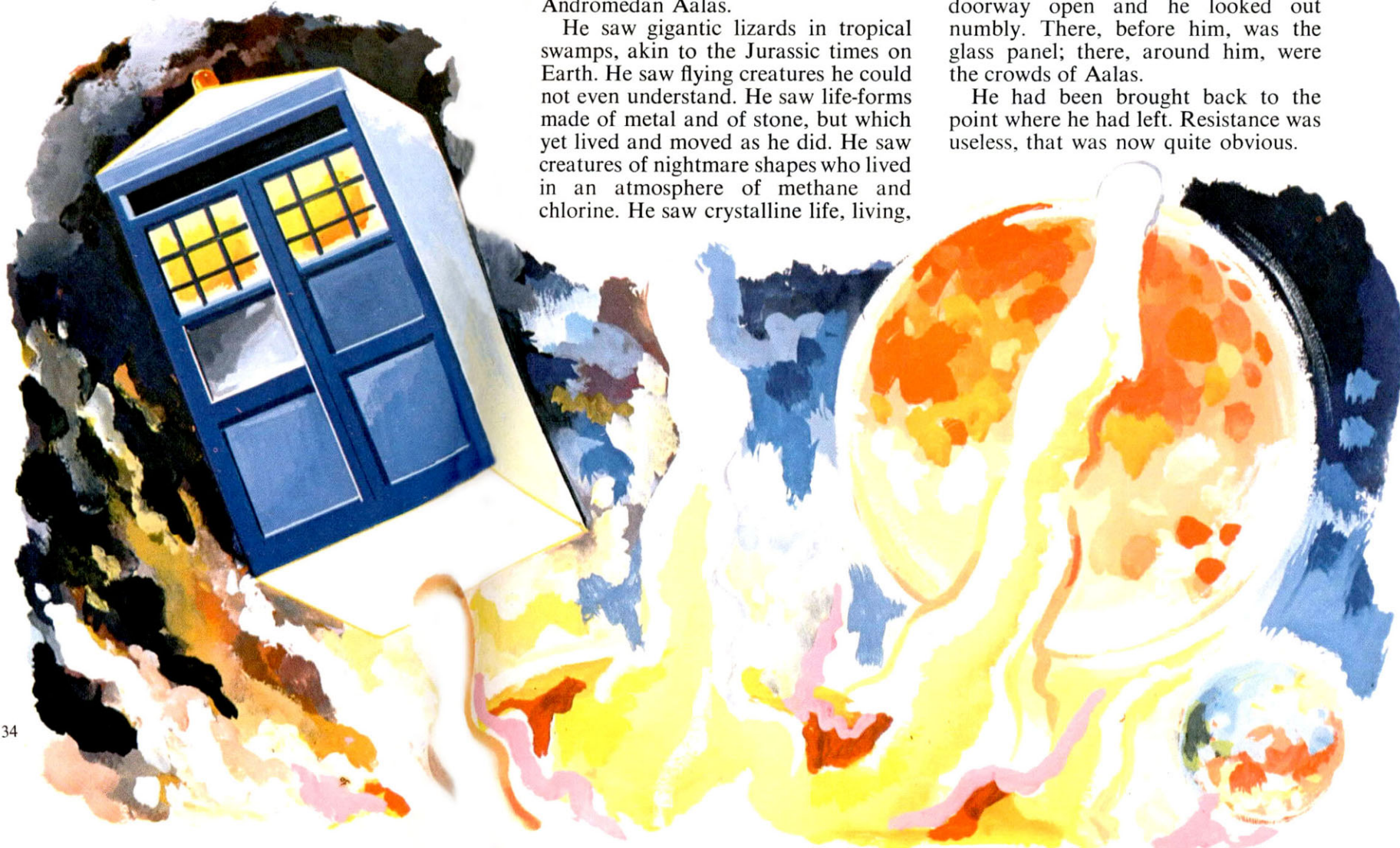
He sent *Tardis* wheeling and swooping through that great cloud of shining globes and, as in a dream, he found his ship landing upon first one and then another. No more of the Aalas did he see but what he did see almost numbed and crippled his mind. Of marvels and monstrous life-forms he thought he had seen much in his own travels, but this was something else again. His mind grew faint as he witnessed the infinite complexity of the variations upon the theme of Life that was represented in this mighty armada of The One and his Andromedan Aalas.

He saw gigantic lizards in tropical swamps, akin to the Jurassic times on Earth. He saw flying creatures he could not even understand. He saw life-forms made of metal and of stone, but which yet lived and moved as he did. He saw creatures of nightmare shapes who lived in an atmosphere of methane and chlorine. He saw crystalline life, living,

thinking breeding crystals. He saw worlds where there was no visible life yet where life quite evidently lived. He suspected these of being living clouds, or groups of loosely joined cells, invisible to his eyes. He saw worlds where life was just beginning and where forms were being patterned out of chaotic void. He saw worlds where—but there his mind closed, stiff and numb. His eyes ceased to see and his ears to hear. . .

As in an endless dream, he sat at the console and waited. He saw the great doorway open and he looked out numbly. There, before him, was the glass panel; there, around him, were the crowds of Aalas.

He had been brought back to the point where he had left. Resistance was useless, that was now quite obvious.



"A sound demonstration," said the voice of The One. "We are not quite satisfied, however. Why would you not escape from our currents of force?"

"I tried. Heaven knows I tried," moaned Dr Who. "Surely you should not be asking me that question, monster? It was you that prevented me from escaping from the grip of your fiendish forces."

"You are mistaken, Dr Who," came the reply and he noted, even in his despair, that, for the first time, the thing had given him a name. "I had given you your freedom as we wanted to see just what your machine could do. We do not know what we would have done had you attempted to escape completely. It is a problem we have not yet resolved, this problem of obedience and free-will. Your defiance of us is a new thing. We have for so many ages been accustomed to the mindless obedience of our Aalas. No doubt we would have brought you back eventually had you gone too far. But in the event *we did not*. Something else forced you back here. Can you imagine what it was that did this to you?"

Wildly Dr Who looked round him, at the strange unearthly scene, and at that talking glass window, across which lights flitted slowly, as though the intellect in its relays and transistors was cogitating some highly important fact to its logical conclusion.

Was there an opposing force somewhere near this fleet of worlds intent upon colonising a defeated galaxy? Could it be possible that there might be, close at hand, some force that might aid him in crushing this monstrous intellect, or at least help him to escape from it. Could he but do so, why

should he worry then about the invasion of the Milky Way galaxy? The thing would not happen for millions of years in the future. Why should he consider the fate of the galaxy?

"I can imagine nothing," he replied.

"We know what it was that drew you back, man." The One seemed to be answering his very thoughts. "Indeed, you may expect no help from it; on the contrary it will be our most powerful weapon in forcing you to give us what puny aid you can.

"Now, Dr Who, we have finished with preliminaries. I now know all that your strange ship can do. It cannot be duplicated in the worlds of my armada, that is true. There is only one of you and although we can make Aalas, we cannot make men. You will be my aide then, my chief ally. The complexities of your brain and your personality will be of use to us. When we reach our objective, we will have many life-forms to deal with as we come to exterminate them from their planets to make room for our hordes of refugees.

"You have seen for yourself—we allowed you to see—the great complexity of the multitude of life-forms bred in Andromeda. Now, you must know that the galaxy of Andromeda, in its sweep through space, is approaching a great void, many millions of light-years across, which in some mysterious fashion will not allow passage to the currents of energies that web the rest of the Cosmos. We have yet to work upon the problem but at present we think that the region is Absolute Nothingness, a region bypassed by creation. Your little mind may not be able to grasp the idea but it is enough for you to know that every other part of the Cosmos tingles and vibrates with

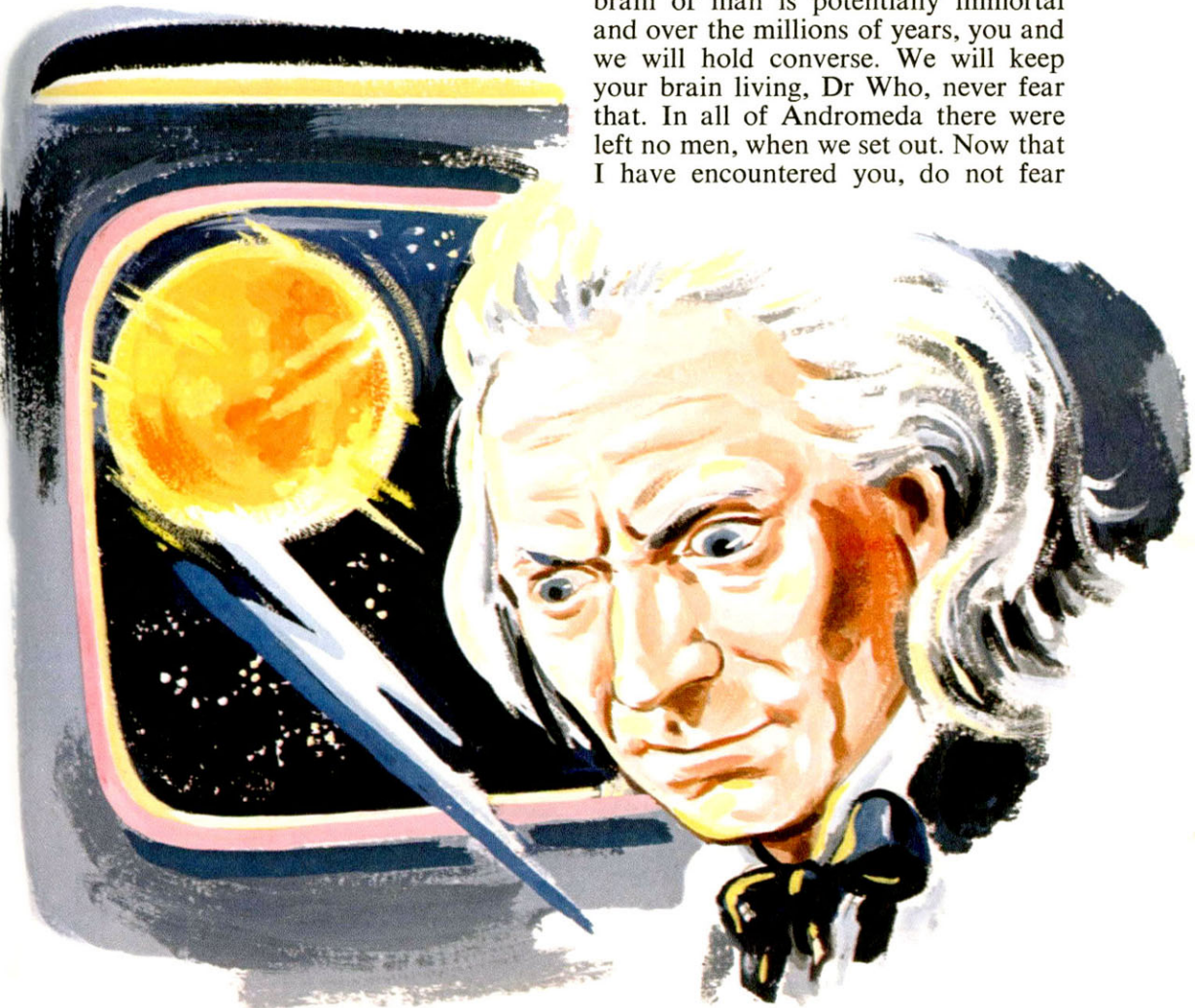
the energies that forever throb through it.

"In an immense, but to us a measurable period, the galaxy of Andromeda will pass into that dead region of space and all life and being will gradually cease within the entire galaxy. Now, great as our intellect is, we cannot as yet navigate a galaxy. But worlds we *can* navigate and so we set out. We gathered our worlds together and some we reconstructed afresh, more like to our ideas than the natural ones, and then we set forth.

"It will be many millions of the years you know before we arrive but we are immortal, we and our Aalas. The creatures on some of the other worlds of ours that you saw, Dr Who, are not immortal. They will breed and die and live again in their descendants during our passage, and only a chosen few of them will even know that we are engaged on an invasion."

Dr Who laughed bitterly. This was all true, all too hideously true!

"You will never be allowed to die," the voice went on serenely. "Your brain will live on, doctor. Even the tiny brain of man is potentially immortal and over the millions of years, you and we will hold converse. We will keep your brain living, Dr Who, never fear that. In all of Andromeda there were left no men, when we set out. Now that I have encountered you, do not fear



that I will ever let your brain die, doctor."

Frozen with horror, Dr Who sat at his console as the voice reached him. A grip of ice clasped his heart as he realised that the hideous thing this monster machine proposed could actually be done. It had been done on Earth. Brains had been kept alive artificially. Not the brain of a man certainly, but that would have been only a matter of time. It was evident that the intellectual powers of this multiple machine were far, far beyond what he had even suspected in his wildest moments.

He must not think of these fearful things; he must banish them from his mind. Feverishly he sought for something else to think about and hit upon it.

"You spoke of a bargain between us," he said quickly. "You spoke of something you called the Diagrams. What are they?"

"We would have exchanged knowledge of our Diagrams for the use of your vessel, to multiply its principles in our armada, to hasten our long journey. But since that is not possible there will be no bargain. But we will speak to you of the Diagrams, for at some moment in the future that brain of yours will be called upon to understand them. After all, you are a child of your galaxy and may be expected to understand something about it."

"Merciful heavens," exclaimed Dr Who. "A galaxy! Have you no idea of what a galaxy is?"

"I should have," was the toneless reply. "Considering that we ruled one. Your galaxy, for instance, is about one hundred thousand light years in diameter. Andromeda is somewhat



smaller. What is so complex and unusual about a galaxy, Dr Who?"

"I have no words for you, monster," said the doctor in a whisper.

"The Diagrams are our maps of your galaxy, doctor. For many millions of years our instruments have been watching you from afar. Ever since we detected the region of Nothingness which lies across the orbit of Andromeda we have been doing this. I will not burden your little mind with numbers of millions of years. It would be useless."

"How is it possible to map out a galaxy?" murmured Dr Who, as he fought against stupefaction and unbelief.

"The substance of the Diagrams is

material but the Diagrams themselves are of pure light," said The One. "There are many of them and each of them is so thin that a hundred thousand of them form a height no greater than a millimetre. They are exact, as their components change with the ages and change in accordance with the immutable laws of the Cosmos which holds all matter in its patterns. In a thousand million years, our Diagrams of power

will be as accurate as when they were formed. They will lead us to the stars of power in your galactic worlds, to the stars still replete with the heavy elements of their youth, not radiated away into energy as are many of the tired old stars of my galaxy now. We need that radioactivity, we and our Aalas. It is the breath of life to our Aalas."

"This thing you plan is impossible," said Dr Who wearily. "You torment my mind with your talk of galaxies of light-years and millions upon millions. Talk to me about something I can understand."

"We will talk to you about your four companions," said the voice calmly. "We have been greatly interested in them as specimens. The woman, in particular, interested us. It is many an age since we ceased making female Aalas. What was the point of it? Also, the young ones fascinated us. Never, since the extinction of the men in Andromeda, had we seen a child. The two you brought were of the utmost interest to us. And they promise many hours of intellectual enjoyment."

Dr Who had scarcely heard anything but the first words. A great light had shone into his mind. That was it! That was what had dragged him back to this place, not some unimaginable powers of this monster computer. His bond with his fellow-creatures had been the pulling power which had drawn *Tardis* back. He thought he had completely forgotten those wretched Mortimers in his attempts to escape, when all the time his subconscious mind had been drawing him back instinctively. He and they were of one blood, one flesh, one heart and mind. He had not been able to desert them.

He watched as the man and the woman were brought into the little round room. The woman was weeping and the man, who now seemed to have lost all his terror, was raging and struggling against the steely grip of the serene-faced Aalas which held him.

"Dr Who," he howled, "they've got the youngsters. They won't let us see them. They're going to cut us open and see how our bodies work. I tell you these creatures are monsters, evil fiends, and we *are* in Hell, after all. There's no flames in Hell, only these fearsome creatures and that bodiless voice which follows you about everywhere you go."

"They caught you then?" asked Dr Who stupidly. What else was there to say to this poor couple? Far better they had perished in the fires.

"The very walls spoke," moaned the woman. "The walls moved and the floors tilted whichever way we went. The ship is alive, Master, it is in very truth alive. And they've got Alan and Ida. The Good Lord alone knows what horrors they'll do to my poor bairns. Save us, Master, or if that be beyond your powers, kill us quickly. I cannot live to think of what is happening to my two lambs."

"You," shouted the doctor in a loud voice. "You, behind that panel there, you that calls itself in supreme blasphemy The One, where are the two children, and what have you done to them?"

"Nothing, as yet," came the voice. "They are being observed. Their reactions are a refreshment to our minds. It is so many, many ages since we have known children."

"You must release them to this man and this woman," raged the doctor.

"Are you not able to see the torture of these poor folk? You told me that men and women built you and embodied their minds and thoughts in you. Have you no memories of that time?"

"Memories, yes, but memories are merely facts," was the reply. "You will by now, Dr Who, have realised the power that dragged you back to this world. That emotion is very deep in you humans we have noted, and there are many more emotions that sway and rule your species. We will study you most closely, we can assure you. For it is becoming obvious that if we are to populate our new galaxy, it may not be all with Aala. They are willing, mindless servants. But we feel in us a growing need to meet minds that oppose us. We will use you five as our patterns. You are greatly honoured, you and your five companions."

"I can talk to you no longer," said Dr Who. "Release the man and the woman and bring the children to them. Then you can kill us in any way you wish. Up to now you have been playing with us as a cat plays with a mouse."

"But we have no wish to kill you," said the voice, still quite calm and expressionless. "You are missing the

point entirely, which makes us recall that the men of Andromeda were not notably logical. Of course, we will release the man and the woman. See, they are now free. They can come to you in your box."

"And the two children," said the doctor sternly as he saw two Aalas release the Mortimers who stumbled and half-fell into the *Tardis*.

"That will take a little longer," replied The One. "Human children are even more unpredictable than their elders. But do not fear. No harm will be done to the boy and the girl—we believe that was their designation. Now that we have done what you asked, Dr Who, why do you say that you can no longer talk to us?"

"We have nothing to talk about," snapped Dr Who.

He felt better already now that the two Mortimers were free. Their freedom and his might be a mere shadow

in face of the truly enormous power obviously possessed by this monster mind. But freedom of a sort it was.

"Your mind and mine are poles apart," Dr Who continued. "You speak in simple terms of stars and galaxies. You speak as though they are grains of dust to be swept up, to be invaded and colonised and such stuff and nonsense. You speak like a god, whereas you are merely a cunning conglomeration of metals and wires, relays, switches, and transistors. I can recall the day and age when such things as you, were just invented. They were called adding machines at first, then computers. In your galaxy of Andromeda your ancient men obviously went the necessary logical step further. In some way they endowed you, a mere machine, with a personality, or perhaps with a composite personality,



built of the millions of their minds, transferred to your entity ”

“ It is as you say,” went on the voice of The One impassively. “ The logical aim and end of the thinking machine is ourselves. We are many, yet we are One. We ruled the galaxy of Andromeda for an age and now we rule our armada, crossing the void to find a new home. Do your emotions not speak to you anything of that, Dr Who?”

“ Eh?” said the doctor, puzzled by the sense of the words. George Mortimer tugged at his arm and spoke hoarsely.

“ Don’t argue with it, Master,” the man muttered. “ It’s the Devil himself. He’ll take us down to Hell with him. Don’t have no truck with him, doctor.”

But Dr Who shook off his arm and turned to the panel again. “ You have indeed studied human emotions,” he said slowly. “ In your memory banks, stored there by those you call your ‘ancestors,’ are no doubt millions of facts and figures and ideas from those long-ago days. Now you are being subtle, One, you are trying to work on my sympathies. You want me to picture the millions of Andromedans, each a life-form of an infinite variety of species.

“ I have seen some of them and they *do* certainly have a right to live. But it is not important that the life in their own galaxy is measured to an end, still less such a far distant end. All created life has a beginning, a middle, and an end. All life must die. All planets must decay to a cinder. Even the greatest stars must face a future when at some period they will be cold, dead clinkers rolling silently through space. And so, even a galaxy, a mighty company of

many hundreds of thousands of stars, must sweep onwards upon the slow path of the heat-death, and must one day die. How do you think you can halt the finger of destiny?”

“ You speak fantasy, doctor,” said the voice. “ There is no destiny but us. We, The One of Andromeda, are our own destiny. The mechanics of the universe have compelled us to seek a new home when we know the end will come for our own. What else would you have us do?”

With half his mind, Dr Who remembered that The One sometimes referred to its own self as ‘ we ’ and sometimes as ‘ I.’ That was curious, very curious. Consider this machine, he said to himself. It is a tremendously complex thinking machine, composed of the minds of many millions of the ancient Andromeda species of humanity. In the beginning it would be a mixture, a compound, of many minds. Has it now grown a Super-Mind? Has one most powerful intellect taken charge of the whole complex and is it this that calls itself ‘ I ’? It is very important for, if that is so, there must be some way of defeating it, or at least of destroying those diagrams of power. Without these, The One is powerless in its invasion plans.

“ I will talk no more to you,” said the doctor flatly, “ unless you bring back the two children. This man and this woman are going mad with grief at being separated from them.”

“ The children are coming,” said the voice. “ Our observations of them are complete and we have decided that they are useless to us.”

The two children entered gaily and in their hands were bowls of the food

that had been given to them all on their arrival. Ida laughed across at her parents and giggled.

"Children," said Dr Who steadily, "come here both of you. Come inside to your mother and father and me. We're going to leave this place now. I'm going to close the door so come inside or you'll be left behind."

"I won't come until I get some more of the jelly," said Ida with a pout. Alan pulled at her arm and she pulled herself away.

The voice from the panel spoke again. "How the human race ever tolerated its young is a problem that is quite past our reasoning," it said. "It did not take us very long to devise a better method of population increase. Look round you at my superb Aalas. Will you not agree that they are infinitely superior to humanity?"

"Nasty, stupid voice," cried Ida. "And nasty stupid things, all of you. None of you will give me more jelly."

I know what *I'm* going to do."

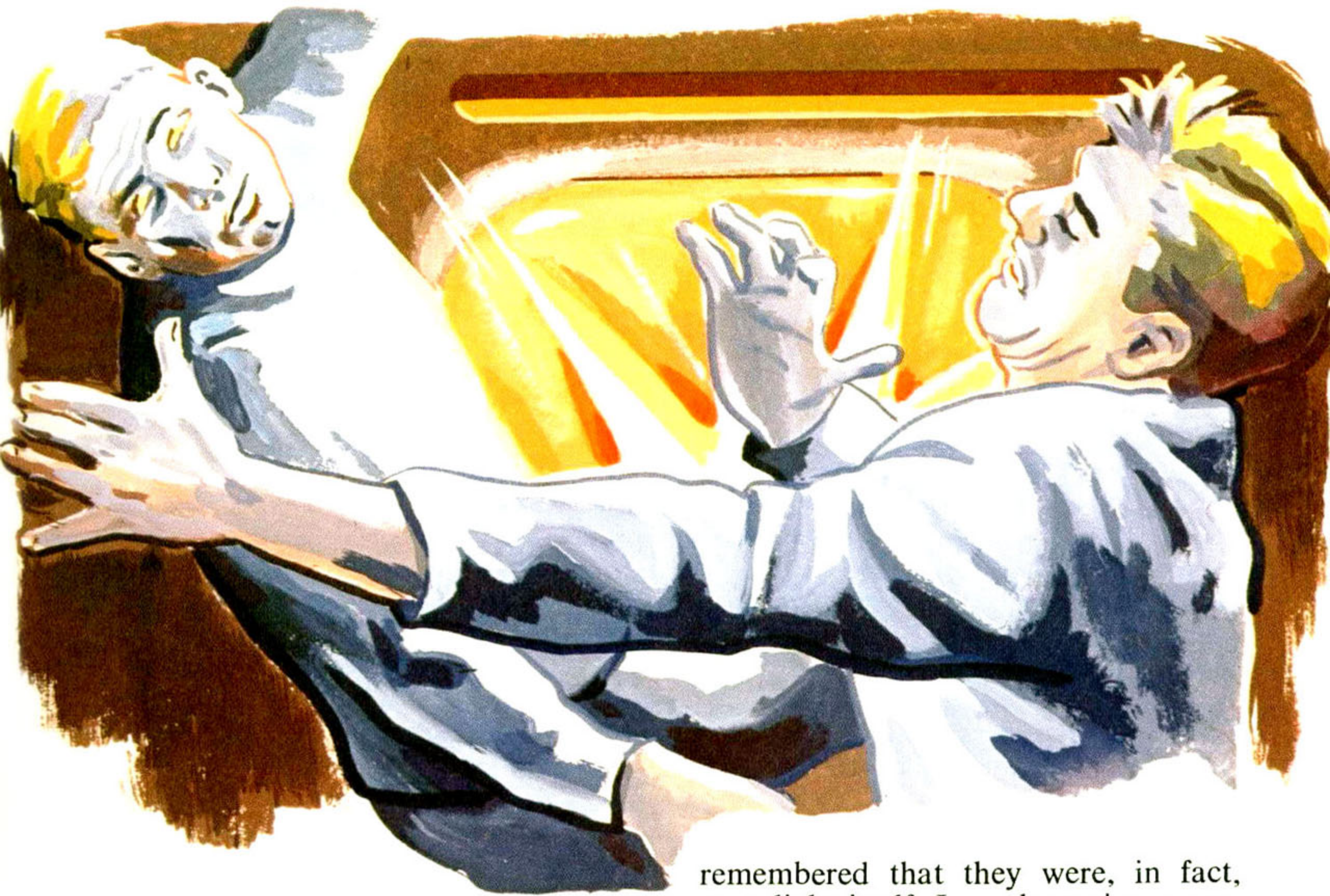
Like one paralysed, Dr Who saw her raise her little arm and hurl her empty bowl straight at the glass panel. It broke into many pieces and . . . before their eyes the ruler of the galaxy of Andromeda went insane. Only this time there was no recovery. The heart and centre of The One had been in this place for ages quite secure from its own obedient slaves, the Aalas. Now, with the artless directness of a child, and a naughty one at that, the doctor told himself severely, the impossible had happened.

The Aalas stood irresolute, staring round them as though coming out of a trance. Several of them fell down and did not get up.

The voice of The One issued from behind the panel. It groaned and whimpered, it roared and raved. It whispered and murmured and implored. It began to rave in a thousand different tongues. It spoke words unknown to Dr Who. It reeled off mathematical problems like a demented parrot.

The doctor longed for a tape-recorder so that some record might be





kept of the marvels of its ravings. All its vast knowledge seemed to be teeming out of its mind at the moment of his death, and all of it most priceless . . . and all being irrevocably lost.

He pictured the vast armada of a million worlds, now leaderless, ploughing on through the trackless void, with no destination now. Well, the familiar world and galaxy of the Milky Way had never known its final destination, had it? He left *Tardis* and threaded his way through the motionless Aalas. He approached the gibbering thing behind the panel and there was no movement to prevent him as he put out his hands to touch the Diagrams of power.

At first they were cold to his touch and then intolerably hot. Their substance flowed like light itself and he

remembered that they were, in fact, pure light itself. In a showering coruscation of sparks they fell to pieces in his hand and he was left holding—nothing. The coloured lights vanished and the Diagrams of power ceased to be.

He stared up at the broken panel and spoke. “Goodbye, my friend,” he said. “Your destiny overtook you at last. The fault was not yours. The fault lay with the humans who built you and gave you the powers you had. You only fought to protect your own.”

There was no reply from the cold dead panel and the atmosphere in the little round room seemed suddenly to have changed. There was no tingle in the air and the lights seemed to burn less brilliantly.

He stared at the figures of the Aalas all round him. Their faces were as blank

as ever but their eyes, which before had held expression, were now totally blank. Their master was gone and they were but dead flesh. Little Alan Mortimer pushed one of them with his finger and laughed as the blonde giant toppled over and lay still.

His mother was smacking his sister Ida, who was crying bitterly.

"What did I do, mother?"

"What did you do, Ida," said Dr Who, with a little smile. "Do you know, my child, you've done something pretty tremendous today. I don't suppose any other person in all the history of mankind has done so much for mankind, without even knowing it."

"I want to go home to London," cried the girl. "Even the fire was better than this. What I did was not so very bad. I just threw the bowl at that stupid talking window."

Dr Who laughed outright. "We'll get you back to London, Ida. Those Diagrams might have been very useful to me," he sighed. "Ah, well, I'll just have to rely on my own old methods. My child, you asked what you'd done. You've just saved a galaxy, my dear. When you're an old crone you'll be able to tell your grandchildren you saved their galaxy for them."

"Don't you be filling the child's head with nonsense," Helen Mortimer scolded him.

The great door closed and Dr Who became very busy at the controls. The two elder Mortimers watched him with open mouths and terrified faces. But the little girl went up to him and leaned quite unconcernedly on the edge of the control-panel. To her they were only pretty lights and flashing needles.

"What's a galaxy, Master?" she asked. "That's the prettiest word I ever heard. What's a galaxy?"

"What is a galaxy?" mused Dr Who, busy with his dials and levers. "Now, my child, *there's* a question which might have a most fascinating answer. Do you know, one of these days I'm going to have a look for myself."





